

SECTION 4

Among the most important aspects of motor vehicle crashes are the characteristics of persons involved in crashes as either operators, passengers, pedestrians, or bicyclists. This section presents a variety of analyses which examine the relationship of age and sex to motor vehicle crash patterns.

This section of the report details several commonly known demographic relationships experienced in other states and nationally. Data from police reported crashes indicate that drivers age 25-34 and 35-44 accounted for about 34% (17% each) of all crashes, the greatest proportion for all age groups. The median age of crash involved drivers (35.3 years) was significantly lower than that of all licensed drivers (44.0 years) in 2006, as has been the case in previous years.

However, a simple distribution of the age of crash involved drivers does not adequately portray the *risk* of crashing for various age groups primarily because almost 85% of all drivers are over the age of 25. Age adjusted crash rates per 1,000 licensed drivers indicate that drivers under 25 years of age had the highest rate of crash involvement of all age groups, with 16-20 year olds involved in crashes more than twice as likely as would be expected given their number of licensed operators.

Conversely, drivers over the age of 45 were significantly less likely to be involved in crashes. Data on vehicle miles traveled by age are not available in Vermont, so crash rates based on mileage and age were not able to be computed.

Younger drivers also pose greater challenges for the highway safety community in several other respects. The highest rates of crashes resulting from driving under the influence of alcohol are found among 18-24 year olds. Additionally, younger drivers and occupants involved in crashes report wearing seat belts less often than older persons. Eighty-six percent of persons age 18-29 reported using a restraint in 2006, compared to around 88% usage for persons over age 30 and 93% for those under age 10. As one would suspect, adults as well as children who are not restrained are more likely to be injured.

Another finding consistent with previous years and national data is that crash involved drivers are disproportionately male. While Vermont's licensed drivers are almost evenly split between males and females, about 55% of crash involved drivers were males in 2006. Where injuries were minor, male and female involvement was about equal; however, for operators in fatal crashes the distribution shows that a higher percentage of males (78%) were killed than females (21%) similar to findings in many previous years. Also, for serious injuries male operators accounted for a higher proportion (60%) than females (40%). In addition, where alcohol was involved, 76% of the crash operators were males.

A variety of additional data regarding alcohol involved crashes are presented in this section. There were 788 alcohol related crashes in 2006, a decrease of 1% from the 2005 level. However, data for DUI crashes indicate there were only 20 in 2006.

Pedestrian and bicyclist findings underscore the fact that encounters with motor vehicles often result in injury or death. The vast majority (80%) of the 139 pedestrians and 119 bicyclists involved in a motor vehicle crash suffered an injury of some type. No pedestrians or cyclists were killed in 2006. An analysis of age shows almost 28% of pedestrians and bicyclists to be age 20 or younger. A large portion of pedestrians (26.9%) are in the age 50 or above category.